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PRAYER.

ITS ORIGIN, MEANING AND ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

IT MAY be said that the time has passed when the study of religion and of that religious feeling which is the “essential basis of conduct”¹ could be claimed as the exclusive product of a single body of men. With the growth of the science of comparative religion, and with the great importance now attached to the study of religious phenomena by psychologists and ethnologists, it is to anthropology that one must turn if religious values are to be fully understood. What is most remarkable is the fact that while on the one hand we have many Christian churches deploring the falling off in numbers of their communicants together with the universal apathy displayed by the laity at large to all matters of a religious character, we should have on the other hand, and as a result of recent scientific investigation, a value and a significance attached to the religious instinct which promises to be pregnant with future possibilities. If it were necessary to indicate, by one fact more than another, how great this interest is, one might point to that valuable and monumental work, now in course of publication, which deals with all the main factors of religious life and culture—with its mythology and its history, its superstitions and its ethics, its philosophy and psychology,² for “it is safe to say that there is no

¹ Thomas Henry Huxley.

² *The Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Edinburgh, edited by Dr. Hastings, M.A., F.R.A.I., and Dr. Selbie, M.A.

subject of modern research which concerns all classes as nearly as the study of religions.”³

Until recent years it was held for the most part that barbaric and uncivilized man possessed little of the sentiment and feeling which we associate with the term “religion.” He was given credit for the practice of hideous superstitions and of rites of the most abominable kind, but it was explicitly denied that he possessed religious feeling in any higher form.⁴ Even authorities like the late Lord Avebury held that prayer itself, being to us a necessary part of religion, was quite independent of the lower forms of religion.⁵ We know now that, not only is religion a matter of vital importance in the every-day life of the savage, being interwoven with all his habits, customs and mode of thought,⁶ but that the practice of prayer itself is found to exist among some of the most savage races known to us. Even certain savage customs, barbarous and cruel as we may deem them, when traced to their fountain head are found to have arisen from the most pious motives and are carried into effect through the most earnest conditions.⁷ What adds a deep significance to the value of the religious impulse is the undoubted fact that wherever and whenever a religion has been brought into ridicule and contempt, physical and moral decrepitude have followed as a fixed and a natural consequence. Having for my part paid no inconsiderable attention for some years past, to the effect of outside or alien influences upon the character of civilized and uncivilized man in various parts of the globe, it would be a most difficult task for me to name any race or tribe whose morale has not undergone serious degeneration

³ See Committee on Publication, Brinton's *Lectures on the Religions of Primitive Peoples*, New York, 1897.

⁴ Dr. Brinton, *ibid.*, pp. 30-31, referring to Lubbock and H. Spencer.

⁵ *Origin of Civilization*, 6th ed., 1911, p. 402.

⁶ See Ellis, *Tshi-Speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast*, 1887, p. 9.

⁷ Ellis, *ibid.*, p. 9.

when once its ancient ritual and its religion have been brought into contumely. This being granted, the paramount importance of religion may be considered to be almost beyond discussion.

Writing some years ago, the late Auguste Sabatier, formerly Dean of the faculty of Protestant theology, Paris, declared that nothing better reveals the worth and moral dignity of a religion than the kind of prayer it puts into the lips of its adherents;⁸ a truism which we shall find to be as applicable to the most primitive, as it is to the highest forms of religious development.

Many prayers have been recorded in recent years from savage races. An examination of these petitions shows that, in the great majority of cases, it is for material prosperity and gain that the savage prays. He asks that his crops may prosper, that he himself may be freed of danger, that no disease may befall his cattle or that they may not die.

Thus the Egbos, a tribe living in the depths of the bush in Southern Nigeria, pray to the sun and say:

"Sun of morning, sun of evening, let me be freed from danger to-day."⁹ In another instance the prayer is to Obassi—a kind of ancestor god—"Obassi, everything was made by you; you made earth and heaven; without you nothing was made, everything comes from you."¹⁰

The natives of Brass, in the Niger Delta, before eating and drinking, present a little food and liquid to the household deity, and then offer the following prayer:

"Preserve our lives, O Spirit Father who has gone before and make thy house fruitful, so that we thy children shall increase, multiply, and so grow rich and powerful."¹¹

⁸ *Philosophy of Religion Based on Psychology and History*, 1897, p. 109.

⁹ P. Amaury Talbot, *In the Shadow of the Bush*, 1912, p. 21.

¹⁰ Talbot, *ibid.*, p. 66.

¹¹ A. G. Leonard, *The Lower Niger and its Tribes*, 1906, p. 292.

Writing of the New Caledonians, Dr. J. G. Frazer says: "If only wrestling in prayer could satisfy the wants of man, few people should be better provided with all the necessities and comforts of life than the New Caledonians."¹²

The Todas, a pastoral tribe inhabiting the Nilgiri plateau, offer prayer continually in their daily life. Dr. W. H. R. Rivers, tells us that these prayers are in the form of supplications to invoke the aid of the gods to protect their buffaloes. "May it be well with the buffaloes, may they not suffer from disease or die, may they be kept from poisonous plants, and from wild beasts, and from injury by flood or fire, may there be water and grass in plenty."¹³

To take another example from the Dark Continent, we find that the Bawenda, a Bantu tribe living in the north-eastern portion of the Transvaal, offer the following appeal during their annual sacrifices at the graves of their ancestors:

"O Modzimo, Thou art our father; we, Thy children, have congregated here, we humbly beg to inform Thee that a new year has commenced. Thou art our God; Thou art our Creator; Thou art our Keeper; we pray Thee give us food for us and our children; give us cattle; give us happiness, preserve us from illness, pestilence and war."¹⁴

While this feature, the desire for material gain, is a predominant one in all primitive ritual, it is hardly necessary for us to be reminded that it is also a dominant characteristic of all the higher religions. The great difference between the creed of the savage and the creed of the higher races is this, that while among the former it is material gain that is chiefly sought, among the latter the material

¹² *The Belief in Immortality*, Vol. I, p. 332, 1913.

¹³ *The Todas*, 1906, p. 216.

¹⁴ Rev. E. Gottschling in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 1905, Vol. 35, p. 380.

factor has become, as it were, spiritualized, as we shall see when we come to examine the liturgy of the higher races.

Nevertheless, an ethical element is present in many prayers offered by races whom we, in common parlance, classify as "savage." Thus the Sioux of North America say:

"O my Grandfather the Earth, I ask that Thou givest me a long life and strength of body. When I go to war let me capture many horses and kill many enemies, *but in peace let not anger enter my heart.*"¹⁵

It will scarcely be denied that in the portion of this prayer italicized we have the appearance of an ethical element which is absent from the supplications taken from a lower stage of culture. Indeed, it may be said that, with a few verbal alterations this Sioux prayer might well stand side by side with many of those which still find utterance in the congregations of Christendom. And if it be thought that the ethical element in this prayer be an exception, surely the following incident would serve to dispel it.

At Fort Yates, overlooking the Missouri River, there exists at this moment a remarkable petrification in the shape of a woman with a child on her back, very life-like in appearance and which is venerated by the red Indians as a sacred relic. This figure was brought to the Indian Agency and set up in its present position at the suggestion of Mr. James McLaughlin, formerly Indian agent to the Sioux. A great council of Indians was held, at which it was agreed that the unveiling of the image should be performed by some Indian who could truly claim possession of all the Indian virtues. A warrior named Fire Cloud was selected. On the day of the ceremony, Fire Cloud, addressing the Great Spirit, prayed for peace, hoping that the erection of the monument would establish a lasting peace in all the land, not only between the Indians and

¹⁵ Capt. Clark quoted by Dr. Brinton. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

the white men, but between the Indians themselves. He prayed that the Great Spirit would bless the rock and the place, so that they might be regarded as a pledge of the eternal cessation of warfare. Then, turning to his brother Indians assembled, he charged them that it was *their* duty to observe the laws of the Great Spirit, and that those among them who had not clean hearts and hands should stand abashed and humiliated in the presence of the woman of the Standing Rock and the Great Spirit. He then and there called upon them to repent and devote themselves to lead clean and pure lives in the future.¹⁶

During one of their ceremonies for initiation into the mysteries of manhood, the youth of the Omaha (a Sioux tribe) prays to Wako—the great permeating life of visible nature, itself invisible, but which reaches everything and everywhere. Standing alone in a solitary place, with clay upon his head and tears falling from his eyes, he, with hands uplifted, supplicates the Great Spirit to aid him in his need.¹⁷

These instances in themselves may perhaps suffice to show how important a place prayer does occupy in the mind of so-called savage and uncivilized man.

Let us now turn to the ancient civilized peoples of the Old World. A great number of prayers and invocations have come down to us from ancient Babylonia; many of them being exquisite invocations put into the mouth of worshipers, expressive of their deep sense of moral quiet, yet ending as Dr. Jastrow points out, in a dribble of incantations which had survived from a more archaic period.¹⁸

The prayers of the ancient Egyptians are familiar to most of us. Wake quotes from Bunsen the following

¹⁶ James McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian*, 1910, pp. 36-39.

¹⁷ See 27th *Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, Washington, 1901, by Alice Fletcher and Francis la Flesche (the latter a member of the Omaha tribe).

¹⁸ *The Study of Religion*, 1901, p. 213.

which shows how great has been the growth of the moral element in what had originally been nothing more than a magical formula:

"Oh, thou great God, Lord of Truth, I have come to thee, my Lord, I have brought myself to see thy blessings, I have known thee—I have brought ye truth. Rub ye away my faults. I have not told falsehoods in the Tribunal of Truth. I have had no acquaintance with evil."¹⁹

Turning to ancient Persia, we find in the Gāthas or Sacred Chants attributed to Zoroaster and forming part of the Yashna, the great liturgical book of the Avesta, many prayers of a high and lofty character. These chants are concerned with the nature and attributes of Ahura-Mazda, the Great Living Lord, the Most Wise. The first chant has been described by one of its translators—Canon Cook—as a perfect example of intercessory prayer, in which Ahura-Mazda is addressed as the Supreme Deity, and before whom Zoroaster stands as his prophet. Too long to quote here, it begins and ends with prayer and praise to the Lord of the Universe, but the following lines will give a faint idea of its import:

"With hands in prayer uplifted
To Mazda, the quickening Spirit,
I fain would give due honor
To all who, by good works, win favor
From Him, the Good, the Holy.

"The just, whom thou approvest—
Righteous and pure in spirit,
Do thou, O mighty Ormuzd
With thine own mouth instruct from Heaven!
Teach me thy words of power
By which creation first was fashioned!"²⁰

In another chant Zoroaster presents himself—body and soul—intellectual faculties, moral and spiritual—as an ob-

¹⁹ Bunsen, *Egypt*, Vol. IV, pp. 644-5, quoted by Wake, *Evolution of Morality*, 1887, Vol. 2, p. 132.

²⁰ F. C. Cook, *Origins of Religion and Language*, 1884, pp. 212-216.

lation to the Supreme Being. Canon Cook considers this particular chant to approach more closely than any other Gentile teaching the Christian idea of worship as set forth in the New Testament.²¹ We quote the following lines:

“Teach me to know the two laws,
 By which I may walk in good conscience,
 And worship thee, O Ormuzd,
 With hymns of pious adoration.”
 * * *
 “Oh, holy pure Armaiti,
 Teach me the true law of purity.”
 * * *
 “This offering Zoroaster,
 The vital principle of his whole being,
 Presents in pure devotion;
 With every action done in holiness;
 This above all professing—
 Obedience to thy word with all its power.”²²

Zoroaster's noble moral code, epitomized as it has been in three short simple words, “Good thoughts, good words, good deeds,”²³ is well illustrated by this translation of those beautiful psalms.

Modern Persia, through its thirteenth-century poet, may lay claim to have given Christendom one of those great lessons which, as experience has so painfully shown, is so difficult for many of us to learn and to practise—the lesson of toleration. In that poem known as the *Mathnavi*, which has been described as being perhaps the greatest mystical poem of any age,²⁴ Jalal-al-Din gives us the following exposition of the doctrine of largemindedness. Moses once heard a shepherd praying: “O Lord, show me where thou art, that I may become thy servant. I will clean thy shoes and comb thy hair, and sew thy clothes, and fetch thee milk.” When Moses heard him praying so senselessly

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 247-248.

²³ Art. “Zoroastrianism,” *Encycl. Biblica*, 1907, Vol. 4, col. 5435.

²⁴ *Encycl. Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 7, p. 474.

he rebuked him and said: "O foolish one, though thy father was a Muslem, thou hast become an infidel! God is a Spirit and needs not such gross ministrations as in thy ignorance thou supposest." Abashed at this stern rebuke the shepherd rent his clothes and fled to the desert. Then from heaven a voice was heard saying: "O Moses, why hast thou driven away my servant? Thine office is to reconcile my people with me, not to drive them away, for I have given to men different ways and forms of praising and adoring me. I have no need of their praises, being exalted high above all such needs. I regard not the words which are spoken, but the heart that offers them."²⁵

The religion of the Arabian prophet abounds with beautiful prayers and moral teaching of the highest order. Probably the best known prayer is the opening supplication of the Koran: "Praise be to God, the Lord of all creatures, the most merciful. Thee do we worship and of Thee do we beg assistance. Direct us in the right way, in the way of those to whom Thou hast been gracious, not of those against whom Thou art incensed, nor of those who go astray."

In other prayers it is declared that it is not the formal act of praying that justifies, but the doing of that which is held to be right and good. "It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces in prayer toward the east or the west; but righteousness is of him who believeth in God, who giveth money for God's sake unto his kindred, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the stranger. . . . and of those who perform their covenants when they have covenanted, and who behave themselves patiently in hardship and adversity and in times of violence, these are they who are true."²⁶ In another prayer the petitioner says: "O Lord,

²⁵ Whinfield's translation, quoted in L. M. J. Garnett's *Mysticism and Magic in Turkey*, 1912, pp. 51-52.

²⁶ Syed Ameer Ali, *Islam*, 1909, p. 9.

I supplicate Thee for firmness in faith and direction toward rectitude,—I supplicate Thee for an innocent heart, which shall not incline to wickedness; and I supplicate Thee for a true tongue and for that virtue which Thou knowest.”²⁷

From Mohammedanism it is not unfitting to turn to Buddhism, from that great religious system of Arabia,—with its imageless adoration of Allah, the All-Powerful—to the religion of the Buddha, whose ethical system of philosophy is perhaps one of the the greatest the world has ever received, and whose image may be met with in thousands of shrines and temples in the Far East.

For four hundred years no greater contention has vexed Christendom than that of the use of images in religious worship. Yet, it may be seriously questioned, whether, after all, its true import and significance—its inwardness—has even been realized and understood; certainly not by those who are its chief opponents!

The study of the image ritual of uncultured races throws an unexpected light upon the attitude of those who profess a higher creed, but who still retain their images of wood and of stone. Not even the most barbaric of men believes that the image to which he prays and to which he makes his offering, is of itself a deity. It is to the spirit which enters the idol, as it were, that he makes his supplication. Thus, it can hardly be open to reasonable doubt but that such an attitude has been the precursor and the inaugurator of religion of a greater and a nobler type. Certain it is that not only in its lower manifestations, but in its higher ones as well the presence of an image, to those who believe in it, exerts a most powerful influence over its votaries, but that influence is, in the majority of instances, misunderstood by unsympathetic witnesses who may profess an alien creed.

Near Calcutta, in the little village of Bodh Gaya, there

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

exists the temple of the Mahabodhi—"of the great enlightenment"—a spot sanctified and held to be the most holy on earth by some hundred and forty millions of the human race. That temple, recently repaired by the Indian government, contains a medieval statue of the Buddha.²⁸ What mystic influence that image must have upon the Buddhist worshiper, may be gathered from Moncure D. Conway's description of his own feelings, when he, the rationalist, paid a visit to that shrine during his "Pilgrimage to the Wise Men of the East." He says: "I feel as if I know something of Zoroaster and of Jesus, and these two are to me the men who knew the true religion. The real Buddha is more dim, but at Gaya the thought of that young prince, burdened with the sorrows and delusions of mankind, reached far down in me and touched some subconscious source of tears and love for the man, and I longed to clasp his knees."²⁹ Again, the Rev. John Hedley, a Protestant missionary, who visited a few years since the Pagoda of T'ai Ming T'a in Mongolia, tells us in glowing language of the emotions produced in his own mind when he beheld the standing figure of the Buddha erected in that "pagan temple." He says the image affected him strangely and profoundly, so much so that, at the risk of offending his sturdy nonconformist brethren, he calls it but simple truth to state that it would have been a comparatively easy thing for him to have knelt down before that image and pay homage to "One greater" than Buddha, of whose selfless life Buddha himself was so marvelous a forerunner.

"The sweet and gracious expression on that gentle face would have charmed an artist, inspired a poet, and captured the love of a devotee. . . . Had this figure stood in some venerable cathedral of the Catholic faith in Europe, the

²⁸ Mitra Rajendralala, LL.D., *Buddha Gaya, the Hermitage of Sakya Muni*, Calcutta, 1878. *Encycl. Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 6, pp. 182-185.

²⁹ Conway, *My Pilgrimage*, 1906, p. 263.

most appropriate word to have written over it would have been the old familiar words of love and blessing, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' I do not wonder now that some people find images and icons helpful to their faith. . . . For myself, it is not irreverent to say that though I bowed not my knee nor even momentarily inclined my head as I gazed on what in vulgar parlance we must call an idol, I realized my Lord more distinctly and drew nearer in spirit to Him."³⁰

Surely it is time for us to pause, to rub our eyes, to ask ourselves whether we be in the twentieth century—with its coal and its iron, its corn and its pigs—or whether, after all, we are not back again in the old medieval times—with its saints and its sinners, its Madonnas and its suffering Christ? Once more the picture of Savonarola in his cell, with his crucifix before him, rises before us, as he re-pens the lines of that great prayer of his, known as the "Hymn to the Cross":

"Jesus! would my heart were burning
With more fervent love of Thee,
Would my eyes were ever turning
To Thy Cross of agony.

"Would that, on that cross suspended,
I the martyr-pangs might win,
Where the Lord, the Heaven-descended,
Sinless suffered for my sin!"³¹

Santa Teresa tells us, how, losing her mother at the tender age of twelve years, she went in her affliction to the image of Our Lady, and, with many tears, supplicated *her* to be her mother.³² Upon another occasion, entering her oratory, her eyes by chance fell upon the image of the wounded Christ. "As I gazed on it, my whole being was stirred to see Him in such a state, for all He went through was well set forth; such was the sorrow I felt for having

³⁰ John Hedley, F.R.G.S., *Tramps in Dark Mongolia*, 1906, pp. 140-142.

³¹ See G. S. Godkin, *The Monastery of San Marco*, 1901, pp. 67-68.

³² *Santa Teresa* by Gabriela C. Graham, 1894, Vol. 1, p. 93.

repaid those wounds so ill, that my heart seemed rent in twain."³³

Western civilization, with its immense and its intense material prosperity, has almost forgotten what it owes to the past. It may be that in some near future the infinity of that debt will be recognized and acknowledged. For, were one to search for the most beautiful examples of Christian prayer, which form such an essential feature of the Christian faith, it is to pre-Reformation times that one must turn. No greater battle has ever been waged over any book than over the Book of Common Prayer. Abhorred and hated by the early Puritans, denounced by them as being "full of abominations," and branded as "ridiculous and blasphemous,"³⁴ that book remains still unrivaled and unsurpassed in Christendom as a manual of true devotion. Yet nine-tenths of this book are no recent creation, but belong to the most ancient periods of Christian history. To certain Protestant historians is due the everlasting credit of indicating how vast our debt is. Milner says that the litanies which were collected by Gregory the First, in the sixth century, were not much different from those in use by the Church of England to-day.³⁵

Perhaps the greatest eulogy of all has been pronounced by the Congregational historian, Dr. Stoughton. He says that, "as the sources whence the book was compiled are so numerous and so ancient, belonging to Christendom in the remotest times, as there is in it so little that is really original, so little that belongs to the reformed Episcopal Church of England, any more than to other churches constrained by conscience to separate from Rome—the bulk of what the book contains, including all that is most beautiful and noble—like hymns which, by whomsoever written,

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

³⁴ See Hardwick, *History of the Christian Church*, "The Reformation," 2d ed., 1865, p. 260.

³⁵ *History of the Church of Christ*, Edinburgh, 1841, p. 414.

are sung in churches of every name—ought to be regarded as the rightful inheritance of any who believe in the essential unity of Christ's Catholic Church, and can sympathize in the devotions of a Chrysostom, a Hilary, and an Ambrose."³⁶

In the Bishop's Book—known as the "Institution of a Christen Man" (Instruction of a Christian Man)—issued during the reign of Henry VIII, there is an exceedingly beautiful paraphrastic exposition of the Lord's Prayer, which may be considered a notable instance of that spiritualization of worldly desires to which allusion has already been made. The passage is too long for quotation in full, but we select the following which may prove sufficient to denote its character:

"Oh, our Heavenly Father, we beseech Thee give us this day our daily bread. Give us meat, drink and clothing for our bodies. Send us increase of corn, fruit and cattle. Give us health and strength, rest and peace, that we may lead a peaceful life in all godliness and honesty. . . . Give also Thy grace to us, that we have not too much solicitude and care for these transitory and unstable things, but that our hearts may be fixed in things which be eternal and in Thy Kingdom which is everlasting. . . . Give us grace, that we may be fed and nourished with all the life of Christ, that is to say, both His words and works; and that they may be to us an effectual example and spectacle of all virtues. Grant that all they that preach Thy word may profitably and godly preach Thee and Thy Son Jesus Christ through all the world; and that all we which hear Thy word preached may be so fed therewith that not only may we outwardly receive the same but also digest it within our hearts; and that it may so work and feed every part of us, that it may appear in all the acts and deeds of our life."³⁷

³⁶ *History of Religion in England*, new ed., 1881, Vol. 3, p. 215.

³⁷ See J. H. Blunt, *The Reformation of the Church of England*, Vol. 1, 1868, pp. 448-449.

A passing reference at least must be made to the prayers contained in the Roman Catholic Service books,—of a church which has perhaps been more misunderstood and misrepresented than any other world-wide faith. From the prayers at mass we select the following, which show the high ethical standard of her creed at its best. “O Lord. . . Have mercy upon all heretics, infidels, and sinners; bless and preserve all my enemies; and as I freely forgive them the injuries they have done or mean to do to me, so do Thou in Thy mercy forgive me my offenses.” Or again, take the prayer where the penitent prays for a spiritual cleansing: “O Lord, who once didst vouchsafe to wash the feet of Thy disciples—wash us also, we beseech Thee, O Lord; and wash us again—not only our feet and hands, but our hearts, our desires and our souls, that we may be wholly innocent and pure.”

Can Protestant Christendom present to us anything more touchingly beautiful than the following? At Puente-del-Inca, between Argentina and Chili, and perched upon the highest pinnacle of the Great Andes, there is to be seen a colossal figure of Christo Redemptor—Christ the Redeemer. Cast from bronze cannon taken from the arsenal at Buenos Ayres, and erected to celebrate the establishment of peace between those two countries, it was bequeathed, not only to Argentina and to Chili, but to the whole world, that from that monument it might learn its lesson of universal peace. On its pedestal one may read: “Sooner shall these mountains crumble to dust than Argentinians and Chilians break the peace which at the feet of Christ they have sworn to maintain.”

At the opening ceremony the Archbishop of Argentina, Monsignor Espinosa, offered the following prayer so inexpressibly beautiful that one cannot refrain from quoting it *in extenso*:

“Lord, when my voice is silent, when my eyes cannot

behold Thee, and my heart, already changed to dust, disappears with the remembrance of my existence, Thine image, represented in eternal bronze, shall be a perpetual offering on the highest pinnacle of Argentina. When the white snows shall close the path to men, permit that my spirit may keep vigil at the foot of this mountain. Protect, Lord, our country. Ever give us faith and hope. Let our first inheritance be the peace which shall bear fruit and let its fine example be its greatest glory, so that the souls of those who have known Thee shall be able to bring forth from Thee all forms of blessing for the two Americas. Amen.³⁸

This noble petition may well form a fitting close to our review of the invocations of civilized and of barbaric man. Having passed under examination the attitude both of civilized and uncultured man toward the Unseen, as illustrated to us by examples of his petitions and prayers, we are now in a position to form an estimate as to their moral value.

As we have said, the study of a religion can no longer be claimed as the exclusive business of the theologian or the divine. A new science has dawned—the science of mankind—and with it, that mantle which formerly rested upon the shoulders of its Elijah, has fallen upon those of the Son of Shaphat. Therefore, it is for science now to estimate religious values, to measure all moral worth, and it is not too much to say that her verdict will be in accordance with nature's laws. Like all her sister sciences, the science of ethnology recognizes law everywhere, no less in the prayers of man than in those starry realms far beyond his unaided ken.

Prof. Max Müller once declared that he who knows but one religion knows none. With equal truth it may be said that he who scorns the religion of others is not himself

³⁸ Percy F. Martin, F.R.G.S., *Through Five Republics*, 1905, pp. 358-359.

religious. The day of the scoffer, of him who jeered and held to contempt the faith of another, has passed away. Scientific men at least have too great a respect for nature herself to jibe and jeer at those things which, after all, they may not understand. All they do claim is that all knowledge and experience shall be subjected to the same method for investigation, whether it be the study of a piece of granite, or the interpretation of a prayer.

Just as the exposition of certain "spiritual phenomena" at the hands of Christian theologians is not necessarily in accordance with religion itself in its highest aspects, so the explanation of the phenomena of nature by scientific men is not necessarily "science" in itself. For example, some theologians tell us that the answer to prayer is a process of violation of natural law. "The general providence of God acts through what are called the laws of nature. By his particular providence, God interferes with these laws."³⁹ In opposition to this particular theologic doctrine, the student of nature holds that, so far as human experience is concerned, *all* phenomena—subjective and objective—*must* be interpreted in accordance with natural law. So far as his knowledge reaches, nature never discards her own laws, for if she *could* set them aside she would cease to be natural. Therefore, if the act of prayer possesses any value to man at all, it is from man himself, as part of nature, that one must obtain an answer. The appeal must be to the natural, not to the supernatural; it must be based upon human experience, not upon human supposition.

There is definite reason to believe, outside all supernatural explanation, that the art of prayer and the desires that prayer itself inculcated, is as necessary a part of the psychological evolution of man as any other process of nature.⁴⁰ In itself the act is an outcome of an ethical law

³⁹ See Hook, *Church Dictionary*, 6th ed., 1852, art. "Prayer."

⁴⁰ See (Sir) E. W. Brabrooks' "Anniversary Address," *Annual Address Anthropological Institute*, 1898. *J. A. I.*, Vol. 27.

of the highest order, and is only foolish and inconsistent when it becomes a mere jumble of impossible requests.

In its higher manifestations it creates in the mind of the supplicant moral feeling and desire of the highest character, exciting him to attain those spiritual ends of which his feelings are but the expression. As Lecky has so well put it: "The man who offers up his petitions with passionate earnestness, with unfaltering faith, and with a vivid realization of the presence of an Unseen Being, has arisen to a condition of mind which is itself eminently favorable both to his own happiness and to the expansion of his moral qualities."⁴¹

Man recognizes as a universal law that certain results follow certain acts—be they good or be they bad—as sure as night follows day. The naked savage knows instinctively as it were, that if his actions follow a certain course, certain ills may befall him. While the reason the savage gives in explanation may be a superstitious reason, and therefore no reason or explanation at all, still we cannot fail to discern a natural law which, whatever its origin in the native's mind may be, is nevertheless productive of ethical results. It is for this reason that uncontaminated primitive man is a moral man—as nature herself hath willed. He holds that calamity and disease, fire and flood, are punishments sent in some way or other because of wrong-doing. He believes that nature is angry with him, therefore by his acts he desires and attempts to appease her. While it is true that nature may not show her anger in the way that uncultured man thinks, there is more in this recognition than one might deem.

In a theological work published quite recently, it has been declared that "the scientific student knows nature is not angry and does not require appeasement."⁴² As a mat-

⁴¹ *History of European Morals*, 1894, Vol. 1, p. 36.

⁴² "Concerning Prayer," art. by the Rev. Harold Anson, M.A., 1916, p. 83.

ter of mere fact, the "scientific student" knows nothing of the kind; rather he has reason to believe that nature *is* angry, angry because certain of her laws have been thrust aside, and that she has replaced them by other laws, not less natural, but which produce disease. "The sins of the fathers" and the results thereof, are no less a process of natural law than is the unconscious act of the falling apple a law of gravitation. Even the savage recognizes this, hence his abstention from doing certain acts which are prohibited to him by ancient custom.

For hundreds of years in Christian lands, it has been considered an incontrovertible truth that suffering and calamity are punishments sent by God. In the work just quoted—a work in which the lack of modern prayer is bewailed,—we are told that religion has contributed much to immorality by speaking of suffering and calamity as a judgment imposed by God upon sin, for God does not impose the consequence of evil.⁴³ This is a most remarkable pronouncement, a pronouncement which shows the position to which recent theologic thought has been driven. The old Hebrew prophet knew life better when he declared that God created the evil as well as the good.⁴⁴ Substitute the word "Nature" for "God" and we have the clearly defined position of the man of science. But while we are content to leave to the theologian the interpretation of the mind and the acts of God, so far as modern science is concerned, there can be no possible doubt but that suffering and calamity *are* in many cases imposed upon man by nature, as a consequence of ill-doing.

When a man prays, he asks to be taken by the hand and led away from destruction, so that he may prosper and the right prevail. Modern psychology has shown that the creation of ideals in the human mind leads by a natural

⁴³ *Ibid.*, art. by Arthur C. Turner, M.A., p. 428.

⁴⁴ Isaiah, xlv. 7.

process to the desire to attain those ideals.⁴⁵ Prayer feeds that desire and so leads to their ultimate attainment.

We have pointed out the fundamental difference that exists between the prayer of great religions like Christianity and Islam, and the prayer of some of the lower races of mankind. While the former supplicants pray that they may possess all the great moral qualities, and that their life and character may be moulded so as to produce the noblest and the highest result, the latter ask, in the majority of instances, for those things which add to their material well-being. By examples we have shown that, though the material factor is constantly present in the higher religions, still it is spiritualized in the highest possible way.

Mankind at large has many lessons yet to learn; not the least of these is the serious recognition of that law of nature which goes under the name of "evolution."

Among all "civilized" peoples, there is a growing tendency to forsake that narrow path their forefathers trod, and to divert their course to that broad way which, as we were formerly taught, leadeth to destruction. To-day science can only emphasize this truth our forebears taught us.

Looking around we find man bent upon destruction—everywhere—waging iconoclastic wars of all descriptions. He topples over old idols—some of them foolish ones maybe—and erects in their place idols more hideous than existed before. He destroys that which the past itself held to be bad with that which the past knew to be good. He attempts to substitute the "gospel of hatred" for the "gospel of peace and good will" as a "new way to righteousness."⁴⁶ He flings "overboard law, religion and author-

⁴⁵ See Ribot, *Psychology of the Emotions*, 2d ed., 1911.

⁴⁶ "We preach the Gospel of Hatred, because in the circumstances it seems the only righteous thing we can preach." Leatham quoted by Sir William E. Cooper, C.I.E., *Socialism and its Perils*, 1908, pp. 33-302.

ity,"⁴⁷ to give us in place thereof a society where atheism and anarchy are supreme, and where the family exists no more!⁴⁸ Man is thus attempting to divert nature's course to lead her into paths of his own devising; nevertheless, whatever theologians may now teach, it will be with nature herself that man will have to reckon and whose bill he will have to pay upon her just demand.

The pronounced evils of our day—envy and hatred, malice and greed, no less than war and pestilence—have ever been the result of evil-thinking and evil-speaking; our forefathers were not so far wrong after all when they held that these were punishments, and that war followed in their trail. Were an analysis to be attempted as to the origin of many great wars, it would be found that they were brought about by the greed of man and by the desire to obtain that to which the offender had no right. The story would be that of Naboth's vineyard over and over again. It is from disasters such as these that it is the duty of the Christian to pray, so that his desire may become the father of acts which will frustrate those ends to which his greed would otherwise lead.

There are other great evils beside those of war and of greed. He who manifests ridicule and attempts to bring into contempt those beliefs held sacred by others, has his own lesson to learn. Toleration is the one great virtue which the West may well learn from the East. Even the naked savage never ridicules the religious beliefs of his

⁴⁷ Prince Krapotkin, quoted by G. W. Tunzelmann, *The Superstition Called Socialism*, 1911, p. 108.

⁴⁸ Congress held in London, July 14-19, 1881. "Resolved—that all revolutionaries be united into an International Revolutionary Association, to affect a social revolution, money to be collected to purchase poison and weapons, ministers of state, the nobility, clergy and capitalists to be annihilated." See E. V. Zenker, *Anarchism*, transl. from the German (1898, p. 231).

"In the new moral world, the irrational names of husband and wife, parent and child, will be heard no more." Robert Owen, quoted by Sir W. E. Cooper, *loc. cit.*, p. 41.

It has been stated that a large number of Labor M.P.'s have been or are local preachers of anarchism. See Peter Latouche's *Methods and Aims of Anarchism*, 1908, p. 14.

fellows; it is a besetting sin, not of savage, but of Christian lands.

To live aright, man must conserve, not destroy. He must once again learn to "leave undone those things which he ought not to have done," and "do those things which he ought to have done," for Nature herself insists.

Were modern science asked for one final word, surely it would be this: If to pray means to create and nourish in our minds those thoughts and aspirations whereby we may live a "righteous and sober life" and not follow the "devices and desires of our own hearts," then she would say—"PRAY WITHOUT CEASING."

Pray that our actions may be so shaped that they conform to Nature's will: that she may be our protector, not our avenger; pray that all erroneous teachings—those superstitions of to-day which arouse the passions of the hustings—MAY CEASE!

To the Christian especially she would say—Pray ye in the spirit and in like manner of that old Catholic saint who told you that,

"You were made Christians to this end, that you may always do the works of Christ; that is, that you love chastity, avoid lewdness and drunkenness, maintain humility and detest pride, because our Lord Christ both showed humility by example and taught it by forwards, saying, 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' It is not enough for you to have received the name of Christians if you do not do Christian works, for a Christian is he who does not hate anybody, but loves all men as himself, who does not render evil to his enemies, but rather prays for them; who does not stir up strife, but restores peace to those who are at variance."⁴⁹

To those, whatever their creed may be, who are unable

⁴⁹ Homily of Caesarius, Bishop of Arles, attributed to St. Eligius, quoted by Dr. Maitland, *The Dark Ages*, 5th ed., 1890, pp. 134-139.

to share those thoughts which others revere, she would say: Let us not forget how very little our exact knowledge really is and remember that there may still be many more things than we wot of. Pray therefore that you may sympathize where you cannot understand; for what matters it if some tread a devious path, so long as nature wills?

Lastly, she would ask all mankind—with its divers antagonistic creeds, with its love and its hate, its war and its peace, its weal and its woe—to turn to that great figure in bronze, which tops the heights of the Volcanic Andes—that sublime symbol not of the peace that is, but of the peace that ought to be—and in the silence of those now quiescent rocks, say with Shelley:

“Join then your hands and heart, and let the past
Be as a grave, which gives not up its dead
To evil thoughts.”⁵⁰

So that all storm and strife, and sobs and tears may cease, and a new era dawn, where Nirvana—that “peace which passeth all understanding”—shall reign, and where, once more,

“’neath the sky
All that is beautiful shall abide,
All that is base shall die!”⁵¹

EDWARD LAWRENCE, F.R.A.S.

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⁵⁰ *Revolt of Islam.*

⁵¹ R. Buchanan, *Balder the Beautiful.*